

LISTING OF THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. **(Currently Amended)** A microwavable vacuum-packed frozen sushi product comprising:

a vacuumed and hermetically sealed flexible microwave-safe plastic packing bag which is vacuumed to a pressure of 600mm Hg or lower;

an open-topped plastic box placed in said packing bag, with a substantially continuous empty internal space extending between the plastic box and the plastic packing bag; and

a sushi product placed in said box;

an inner surface of said plastic packing bag being in contact with an upper surface of said sushi product,

a space being formed in said plastic packing bag around said sushi product,

said packing bag, said box and said sushi product being frozen together in a unified form,

the continuous empty internal space in said packing bag having a volume 0.2 to 0.6 times that of said sushi product at the time of thawing, and

the at least one shaped form of frozen boiled rice and the sushi material being so prepared and configured that upon exposure to microwave energy for a predetermined time, steam emanates from the frozen boiled rice so as to fill the space and to uniformly heat the sushi material by said steam after the predetermined time, to raise the temperature thereof without exceeding a maximum temperature for the sushi material, at which maximum temperature the taste of the sushi is impaired.

2. **(Previously Presented)** The microwavable vacuum-packed frozen sushi product according to claim 1, wherein the box is formed as one of a shallow cylinder, a tray or dish container having a rectangular (or square) or circular or oval shape in plan view.

3. **(Original)** The microwavable vacuum-packed frozen sushi product according to claim 1, wherein the microwave-safe plastic packing bag is made of a laminated film

composed of a nylon film and a polypropylene film having a thickness larger than that of the nylon film.

4. (Canceled).

5. (Withdrawn) A method for preparing a microwavable packed frozen sushi product, said method comprising:

disposing a sushi material or materials on a top of a shaped rice section or in the shaped rice section to prepare a sushi product;

placing the prepared sushi product in a plastic box;

placing said plastic box containing the sushi product in a flexible microwave-safe plastic packing bag;

vacuuming and hermetically sealing said packing bag to prepare a vacuum-packed sushi product; and

cooling said vacuum-packed sushi product with a refrigerant cooled to a predetermined freezing temperature to freeze said packing bag, said box and the sushi product, which are constituents of said packed sushi product, together in a unified form, thereby forming a vacuum-packed frozen sushi product,

said vacuum-packed frozen sushi product having a space being formed in said plastic packing bag around said sushi product,

the space having a volume 0.2 to 0.6 times that of said sushi product at the time of thawing.

6. (Withdrawn) A method for preparing the microwavable vacuum-packed frozen sushi product according to claim 5, wherein the box is a box-, shallow cylinder-, tray- or dish-like container having a rectangular (including square), circular or oval shape when viewed in plan.

7. (Withdrawn/Currently Amended) A method for cooking the microwavable vacuum-packed frozen sushi product of claim 1 by means of a microwave oven, said method comprising:

applying heat to the microwavable vacuum-packed frozen sushi product of claim 1 by microwave heating to thereby bring a temperature of at least a part of an exposed longitudinal end portion of the shaped rice section to ~~[[30?]]~~ 30° or higher, followed by termination of the microwave heating to form the space having a volume 0.2 to 0.6 times that of said sushi product around said sushi product in said packing bag; and

allowing the resulting packed sushi product to stand for a period of 15 minutes to 1 hour without unpacking to allow water vapor emanating at least from the shaped rice section to flow in a space formed around the sushi product, thereby steaming the shaped rice section and the sushi material or materials to bring temperatures thereof between ~~15° and 30°~~ 15° and 30°.

8. (Withdrawn/Currently Amended) A method for cooking the microwavable vacuum-packed frozen sushi product of claim 1 by means of a microwave oven, said method comprising:

applying heat to the microwavable vacuum-packed frozen sushi product of claim 1 by microwave heating to thereby bring a temperature of an exposed longitudinal end of the shaped rice section to ~~30°~~ 30° or higher and bring a temperature of an exposed longitudinal end of the sushi material or materials to ~~20°~~ 20° or higher, followed by termination of the microwave heating to bring the volume of the space formed around said sushi product in said plastic packing bag to 0.2 to 0.6 times that of said sushi product; and

allowing the resulting packed sushi product to stand for a period of 15 minutes to 1 hour without unpacking to allow water vapor emanating at least from the shaped rice section to flow in a space formed around the sushi product, thereby steaming the shaped rice section and the sushi material or materials to bring temperatures of the shaped rice section and the sushi material or materials between ~~15° and 30°~~ 15° and 30°.

9. **(Withdrawn/Currently Amended)** A method for cooking the microwavable vacuum-packed frozen sushi product of claim 1 by means of a microwave oven, said method comprising:

applying heat to the microwavable vacuum-packed frozen sushi product of claim 1 by microwave heating to thereby bring a temperature of an exposed longitudinal end of the shaped rice section to ~~30°~~ 30° or higher and bring a temperature of an exposed longitudinal end of the sushi material or materials to ~~20°~~ 20° or higher, followed by termination of the microwave heating to bring the volume of the space formed around said sushi product in said plastic packing bag to 0.2 to 0.6 times that of said sushi product; and

allowing the resulting packed sushi product to stand for a period of 15 minutes to 1 hour without unpacking to allow water vapor emanating at least from the shaped rice section to flow in a space around the sushi product, thereby steaming the shaped rice section and the sushi material or materials to bring temperatures of the shaped rice section and the sushi material or materials between ~~15° and 25°~~ 15° and 25°.